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IN THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims replaces any earlier listing:

1. (currently amended) A method for sensing the surroundings in front of a road vehicle by means of a surroundings sensing system, in which surroundings data is obtained by means of a surroundings sensor, and objects are detected by processing the surroundings data, the method comprising:

defining ~~determining~~ a perception region ~~in which objects are detected~~ corresponding to a partial region of a region sensed by the surroundings sensor,

defining a lane, defining a tolerance region next to said lane, and subsequently restricting the perception region to the lane and the tolerance region,

dividing the thus restricted perception region into a plurality of component-regions,

sensing surroundings within the perception region via a surroundings sensor to obtain surroundings data,

processing the surroundings data to detect objects,

assigning a priority to each component region on the basis of the detected objects,

subjecting ~~the~~ component regions ~~surroundings data~~ to a multi-stage evaluation based on the evaluation priority assigned to the component regions ~~division of the perception region,~~

~~defining a lane before the perception region is divided into a plurality of component regions and subsequently restricting the perception region to the lane,~~

~~subjecting each of these component regions to a specific evaluation~~, and

issuing a warning to a driver of the road vehicle based on a result of the evaluation.

PAGE 2/10 * RCVD AT 10/16/2007 7:24:26 PM [Eastern Daylight Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-5/20 * DNIS:2738300 * CSID:5616596313 * DURATION (mm-ss):03-18

2. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the lane is defined in that either a lane detection is carried out by image processing methods or a lane is defined by means of the data of a navigation system.

3. (canceled)

4. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, for the purpose of carrying out evaluation in the perception region, object perception is carried out by means of image processing methods.

5. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, for the purpose of carrying out evaluation in the perception region, object classification is carried out by means of classification methods in order to rule out false alarms.

6. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 4, wherein, for the purpose of evaluation in the perception region, the distance from detected objects is determined in order to be able to provide information about obstacles in good time.

7. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, for the purpose of carrying out evaluation in the perception region by means of tracking methods, the movement of objects is sensed in order to perceive whether their direction of movement corresponds to the vehicle's own movement.

8. (canceled)

PAGE 3/10 * RCVD AT 10/16/2007 7:24:26 PM [Eastern Daylight Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-5/20 * DNIS:2738300 * CSID:5616596313 * DURATION (mm-ss):03-18

9. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the surroundings sensing system, is an infrared night vision system.

10. (new) A method for sensing the surroundings in front of a road vehicle by means of a surroundings sensing system, in which surroundings data is obtained by means of a surroundings sensor, and objects are detected by processing the surroundings data, the method comprising:

defining a perception region corresponding to a partial region of a region sensed by the surroundings sensor,

defining a lane, defining a tolerance region next to the lane, and subsequently restricting the perception region to the lane and the tolerance region,

dividing the thus restricted perception region into a plurality of component-regions,

assigning a priority to each component region,

subjecting component regions to a multi-stage evaluation based on the evaluation priority assigned to the component regions, and

issuing a warning to a driver of the road vehicle based on a result of the evaluation.

PAGE 4/10 * RCVD AT 10/16/2007 7:24:26 PM [Eastern Daylight Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-5/20 * DNIS:2738300 * CSID:5616596313 * DURATION (mm-ss):03-18